



AESTHETIC ALCHEMY FOR UNVEILING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ARTISTIC CHOICES IN POSTCOLONIAL TRAUMA NARRATIVES: EVALUATING THROUGH THE INTERPRETATIONS OF AMITAV GHOSH'S SELECTED NARRATIVES

Rezwan Ahmed

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Asannagar Madan Mohan Tarkalankar College, Nadia, West Bengal, India

ABSTRACT

A crucial role is played by aesthetics in shaping trauma narratives, impacting how individuals perceive, undergo, and process traumatic events. In this context, "aesthetics" encompasses the artistic or stylistic elements employed in storytelling across various mediums like literature, film, visual arts, and more. Aesthetic choices such as symbols and metaphors become potent tools for conveying intricate emotions and experiences linked with trauma, providing a layer of abstraction that facilitates a nuanced exploration of its psychological and emotional dimensions. Aesthetics also influence the structure of a trauma narrative, with elements like flashbacks, non-linear timelines, or fragmented storytelling mimicking the disjointed nature of traumatic memories, effectively conveying the disorientation experienced by those who have undergone trauma. In visual arts and cinema, the visual representation of trauma significantly influences its perception, employing stark imagery, visual metaphors, and symbolic elements to communicate the profound impact of trauma, transcending the limitations of language in capturing its depth. Aesthetic elements like soundtracks and musical scores contribute to the emotional tone, heightening tension, creating a sense of foreboding, and influencing the audience's engagement with the traumatic content. In literature, the choice of language and literary devices shapes the narrative style, impacting how trauma is portrayed. Vivid descriptions, metaphors, and unique linguistic styles evoke a visceral response, fostering a more intimate connection between readers and the trauma narrative. Additionally, aesthetics can influence the resolution of a trauma narrative, utilizing specific visual or narrative elements to contribute to a sense of catharsis or closure for both the characters and the audience, providing a pathway towards healing and recovery. In summary, aesthetics serve as a crucial lens through which trauma narratives are presented and experienced, enabling creators to enhance their depth, emotional resonance, and impact, fostering a greater understanding and empathy for the complex nature of trauma through thoughtful and intentional artistic choices.

In the context of Amitav Ghosh's novels, the discussion of postcolonial historic aporia becomes significant, especially given Ghosh's aversion to the term "postcolonial" which tends to portray the aftermath of colonialism in a negative light. Ghosh expresses his dissatisfaction with this characterization, stating, ". . . when I think of the world that I grew up to inhabit, my dominant memory of it is not that it was trying to be a successor state to a colony; it was trying to create its own reality, which today is the reality that we do inhabit" (Kumar 105).

This perspective reflects Ghosh's inclination to focus on the efforts of postcolonial societies in shaping their distinct realities rather than being defined solely in opposition to their colonial past. Ghosh's novels, influenced by this viewpoint, illustrate the complexities of postcolonial experiences through the aesthetics of storytelling. Within his narrative framework, he employs symbolism, metaphor, and narrative structure to delve into the intricacies of trauma. Through these aesthetic choices, Ghosh offers a nuanced exploration of the psychological and emotional dimensions of characters' traumatic experiences, challenging conventional postcolonial narratives that tend to emphasize negativity. Ghosh's deliberate use of visual representation, sound, and literary devices in portraying trauma further underscores his commitment to presenting a multifaceted understanding of postcolonial realities. Consequently, his intentional and thoughtful aesthetic choices serve as a critical lens through which postcolonial trauma narratives are depicted, fostering a richer appreciation for the intricate nature of these stories and the diverse realities they represent.

KEYWORDS: Trauma, Aesthetic Alchemy, Amitav Ghosh, Postcolonial.

INTRODUCTION

The critical proceedings to delve into the features for determining the intricate relationship between the postcolonial entity and the reflections of trauma stand relevant in deriving resolutions to the postcolonial identity crisis. As stated by Leela Gandhi in Postcolonial Theory, the internal conflicts detected in the postcolonial instance are found to be the result

of historical belatedness, added by the conditions of cultural obligations. In her words, the state of postcolonial existence ". . . is painfully compelled to negotiate the contradictions arising from its indisputable historical belatedness, its post-coloniality, or political and chronological derivation from colonialism, on the one hand, and its cultural obligation to be meaningfully inaugural and inventive on the other" (6). As Gandhi referred

to the emergence of postcolonial narrative, there is also the detection of linguistic ways of articulating the internal conflicts in the writers and the concerns that are reinforced by the power dynamics of being in a postcolonial ambience. Her core emphasis on postcolonial politics as represented in textual narratives is “the key to all oppositional and anti-colonial meanings” (142). It is under the reflections of Gandhi that I am inclined to offer this chapter to investigate postcolonial trauma narratives as structured by Amitav Ghosh, and thereby critique the “compositions of the colonial aftermath” (Gandhi 166).

From personal introspections, it has been realised that postcolonial trauma narratives play a crucial role by getting aesthetically shaped to impact individual perceptions in the way of undergoing the process of traumatic events. As defined by Sri Aurobindo, ‘the preoccupation with universal beauty even in its aesthetic forms has an intense power for refining and subtilising nature, and at its highest, it is a great force for purification’ (5). Hereby, Sri Aurobindo noted that the pursuit followed by an appreciation of universal beauty, especially in terms of aesthetic expressions, could offer a profound impact on the process of purification or refinement, which is further identified by the elevated sense of human nature. As the individual decides to get engaged with the aesthetic sense of the universe through innumerable ways of art and literature, the possibility of getting drawn to a higher stature of subtlety gets established (Molina 147-48). It is this sense of engagement with the universal pursuit of aesthetic stimulation of nature that I tried to consider while understanding trauma as a way of refinement in the writings of Ghosh. My purpose is also to encourage and elevate sophisticated modes of sensibility in the way to gain balanced transformative power within the narrator, here Amitav Ghosh.

In this context, ‘aesthetic alchemy’ in the domain of literature encompasses the artistic or stylistic elements employed in storytelling across various mediums like fictional narratives, and visual arts. Moreover, by considering the derivations from Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo, it is effective to state that the connection with universal beauty within the ambience of postcolonial existence can serve as a powerful way to resolve the identity crisis. The approach relies on immersing in appreciation and contemplation of the human soul to release the trauma that haunts within. It is hereby that the act of focusing on the universally beautiful aspects and contexts that inspire must be noted as the source to transcend and transform the base of insecurities to a stable state of being (Reid 91-93). Under such guidance, the aesthetic choices in narratives are identified through the usage of metaphors and symbols that could be recognised as potential tools for expressing intricate experiences and emotions of the characters within the texts. Elements of trauma, as sources of raw realizations and feelings, serve as abstractions that facilitate an extensive exploration of the emotional and psychological dimensions of human experience.

Ghosh’s efforts to pave the way towards refinement are accomplished by grappling with identity crises in the individual and offering situations to handle the same. His writings are

specific in offering ideological clashes, added by the traces of harsh realities led by both nature and circumstances. Thus, Ghosh’s writings especially in fiction like *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Glass Palace* (2000), and *The Hungry Tide* (2004), and non-fiction like *The Great Derangement* (2016), and *The Nutmeg’s Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (2021); are specific in offering rich humanitarian tapestry to the readers of postcolonial traumas.

In the selected narratives of both fiction and non-fiction by Ghosh, the essence of aesthetics played a significant role in framing the experiences of trauma. A detailed introspection of this essence in the context of postcolonial trauma narratives gets identified as each text gets critically evaluated in the respective context.

The Fictions

The selected fiction *The Shadow Lines*, *The Glass Palace*, and *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh are engaged in employing vivid aesthetic descriptions, along with the symbolic representation of postcolonial trauma. The objectives of these narratives by Ghosh are to illuminate the hurdles and complexities of human survival amidst environmental degradation, and the impact of collective historical transformation over the lives of individuals while confronting the legacies of colonialism and the consequences of war.

In the setting of *The Shadow Lines* (republished 2009), Ghosh traverses the plot across the regions of Calcutta in India to Dhaka in Bangladesh and concludes in London, the United Kingdom. With his great craftsmanship, Ghosh spanned multiple generations and the related historical events to the storyline. The instances of the Swadeshi movement, followed by the global impact led by World War II, and eventually the socio-political consequences caused by the Partition of India.

In *The Glass Palace* (republished 2017), Ghosh offered a setting that focused on unfolding the historical transformation of Burma, about the historical relation with the lives in Bengal, India, and eventually Malaya. Ghosh took a whole century to span the socio-political consequences led by the colonial conquests, the upheavals led by the wartime situations and the drastic economic transformations attained by the characters, especially, the protagonist, Rajkumar.

Then again in *The Hungry Tide* (republished 2016), Ghosh offered a mesmerising setting of environmental aesthetic representation of the Sundarbans, the vast mangrove forest occupying the areas of Bangladesh and India. It is the harsh reality of the unique ecological diversity of Sunderbans and its perilous terrain that holds the significance of this narrative in terms of understanding the aesthetic alchemy for unveiling the transformative power of nature.

As you read through this chapter, it is significant to mark that I hold the context of aesthetic alchemy refers to the process through which artistic elements; especially metaphorical representations interact to evoke emotional and intellectual responses in readers. In the context of postcolonial trauma

narratives, this alchemy becomes a potent tool for unpacking complex histories, confronting painful realities, and envisioning paths toward healing and reconciliation.

The Shadow Lines (TSL 1988)

As the entire story gets developed by an anonymous character, the usage of first-person narrative “I” dominates *The Shadow Lines*. While referring to the experiences of major characters such as Tridib, Ila, Robi, Tha'mma, May Price, and a few others, Ghosh's narrative is segmented by reminiscences of Tridib's departure for England in 1939 and includes illustrative descriptions of the narrator's childhood days. The development of aesthetic alchemy in the narrative is detected through the beginning of the fascinating recollection of Tridib's imagination in contrast to the practical encounters faced by Ila. As the plot develops into the domain of Tha'mma's retirement in the year 1962, the narrative starts getting the lead to the transformative power of artistic choices. With Tha'mma's quest to rescue her long-lost uncle in Dhaka, the plot starts embarking trauma of Tha'mma's life that was caused by the rescue mission initiated during the eruption of communal tension, and the series of deaths of Tridib, Jethamoshai, and Khalil, the rickshaw puller. Further, trauma is enhanced by Ila's tumultuous marriage to Nick, which eventually gets represented by the power of outrage and betrayal.

The consistent effort to run the impact of socio-political conflicts and the upheavals led by communal tensions in the backdrop of every incident added aesthetic elements to the narrative. Ghosh captured emotional intensity through the collective trauma and psychological nuances as experienced by the characters in the process of describing displacement through the partition of India and the communal riots that followed this incident. Following the perspective of the unanimous narrator, this narrative is the result of the experiences that the narrator earned through the interactive contrasting worldviews of Grandmother Tha'mma and Uncle Tridib. In a very specific manner, Tha'mma offered romantic ideologies related to the context of partition, creating the feeling of nationalism in general. While offering the aesthetic alchemy to the nostalgic instances of her college days, Tha'mma also recalls an innocent-looking young “terrorist” who was arrested and exiled to the Cellular Gaol, Andaman Islands. Tha'mma valorised this young man's attempt to assassinate the English magistrate of the Khulna district and expressed her fascination by stating, “used to dream of him... work for them in a small way, steal a bit of their glory for herself. She would have been content to run errands for them, to cook their food, wash their clothes, anything” (TSL 38-39). Amidst the oppressive status of patriarchal middle-class ethos, Tha'mma appeared strong with her views and personal struggles. On the other hand, the narrator is also much driven by the rebellious spirit of Tridib. As against Tha'mma, Tridib offered liberal notions of revolution with adequate consideration for tolerance and gentleness. In a very contrasting manner, irrespective of possessing diverse ideologies than Tha'mma, Tridib defended her sense of aggression as,

All she wanted was a middle-class life in which, like the middle classes the world over, she would thrive believing

in the unity of nationhood and territory, of self-respect and national power: that was all she wanted – a modern middle-class life, a small thing that history had denied her in all fullness and for which she could never forgive it. (TSL 78)

It is this aesthetic notion that drives the transformative power in the postcolonial narrative of Ghosh and through an artistic choice justifies aggression as a result of traumatic experiences.

The Glass Palace (TGP 2000)

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin expressed, “We use the term ‘postcolonial, however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day” (2). It is this impact of colonialism that becomes visible in the narrative of *The Glass Palace*, whereby Ghosh describes the abundantly extended Southeast Asian landscape by delivering aesthetic illustration of societal as well as familial and societal dynamics under the colonial process. Along with the protagonist Rajkumar, the plot connects and further reconnects with the characters of Dolly and Kanai amidst historical as well as personal events and ambitions, which grew in Burma, Bengal, India, and Malaya. It is the aesthetic representation of the entire backdrop of the Burmese rubber plantation that predominates the plot of *The Glass Palace*. In a very intricate manner, Ghosh offered the atmospheric variations and vivid imagery of the Burmese forests in contrast to the colonial brutality, consistent instances of war, and the enforced cause of migration among the colonised population.

The imperial fleet marched towards the border on 14 November 1885. Just after two days, after hours of shelling, British soldiers conquered the Burmese outposts of Nyaungbinmaw and Singbaungwe. The very next day, at Minhla, the fleet came under heavy fire. The garrison at Minhla was small in size, but it resisted with unexpected tenacity ... the legion of thousand soldiers in the British invasion force consisted of two-thirds Indian sepoys. (TGP 25-26)

The British occupation had changed everything: Burma had integrated into the Empire, and forcibly converted into a province of British India. (TGP 66)

The entire narrative covered a whole century of colonial conquests and kept on referring to the upheavals of wartime sufferance. It further depicted the provisions to adapt modernity through the relentless march of ambition to get recognised as the privileged class of postcolonial society. In a very artistic manner, Ghosh navigated through the complex web of familial bonds, indifferent clashes of cultures, and colonial dominance led by various historical upheavals. There is also the inclusion of the Japanese invasion, added by the reference to the aftermath of World War II that eventually weakened the British Empire in the colonies.

Moreover, as I tried to decipher the meaning of the title, *The Glass Palace*, which is a true representation of aesthetic

alchemy, there is the unveiling of the transformative power of artistic choices generated by Ghosh as the postcolonial trauma. At a conceptual level, I initially marked the title to be a simple representation of the Glass Palace, where the Burmese King resided. As the phrase recurs infrequently throughout the entire narrative, only followed by the brief mention in the opening section, its power to get entitled to the narrative adds apprehensiveness. Initially, it seemed to hint at the destruction, exploitation, and plunder perpetrated by the British. However, with an in-depth interpretation, I discerned a deeper resonance to the artistic choice of referring to the reminiscent of the Crystal Palace, which was also constructed in England during the reign of Queen Victoria. The reference to the aesthetically recognised architectural marvel though meant to symbolize the grandeur and dominance of the British Empire, yet at the same time in the narratives of Ghosh, there is the reference to the traumatic conditions of the colonised population. Through the metaphorical representation of glass for the traumatised colonial population, Ghosh reflected the atrocities of the British Empire from the postcolonial perspective.

The Hungry Tide (THT 2004)

With the backdrop of the perilous mangrove forests of Sunderbans, *The Hungry Tide* revolves around some very contrastive characters like Piyali Roy, Kanai Dutt, and Fokir. The only thread of connection between these characters is the traumatic ambience of Sunderbans. The impact of socio-cultural differences created in the aftermath of British colonial rule in India, Ghosh offered vividness in the portrayal of his characters, yet with the strange uniformity of natural hazards of the Sunderbans. Through the aesthetic framing of the landscape and its inhabitants, he explores themes of displacement, environmental degradation, and resilience in the face of natural and human-made traumas. It is again very interesting to mark that the multiple ways of representing different languages in the narrative, gets referred to as the marker of identity and a tool of power dynamics, which kept on highlighting the lingering effects of colonialism on the cultural expression of the diverse population of this border area of India and Bangladesh. The poverty-stricken population is the mirror image of the harshness of nature and the traumatic socio-economic exploitation caused by the British Empire in the region. There is the matter of making an artistic choice while receiving these contexts in Ghosh's narrative.

While referring to the artistic choice of Ghosh's narrative *The Hungry Tide*, Nandana Dutta referred to the thematic approach of dealing with border issues and the relationships that delved into those border areas of Sunderbans between India and Bangladesh. Dutta made an interesting reference to the French philosopher, Luce Irigaray's idea of "two subjects", which stands for seeing others as distinct individuals (36).

And so it dawned on me: the tide country's faith is something like one of its great mohonas, a meeting not just of many rivers, but a circular roundabout people can use to pass in many directions – from country to country and even between faiths and religions. (THT 247)

On a specific note, Dutta exemplified geoaesthetic context through the characters of Nirmal and Nilima, who work in the same area, yet with different job profiles (37). With a closer look, I have realised that this sense of separation and distinct space for other, or rather 'Other' representing the Orient; can be marked all through the novel. This typical approach holds back the need to realise the spaces that exist between individuals, just like the spaces that remain unconquered in the border areas. Thus, the impacts of postcolonial experiences get further enhanced in the narrative as Ghosh starts referring to Piyali Roy. She is a young marine biologist of Bengali-Indian origin, yet gets identified as an American. It is her quest for the endangered river dolphin, or the Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) that she landed in Sunderbans. There is this state of diaspora that Piyali faces more rigidly as she tries to get settled in the huge ambience of traumatic natural existence. Despite a catastrophic mishap that throws her into crocodile-infested waters, Piya finds salvation in an illiterate young fisherman, Fokir. It is interesting to note that irrespective of linguistic barriers Piya and Fokir instinctively get forged into an unlikely bond. Through this incident, Ghosh adds the artistic scope for the transformative power of accepting differences between individual entities. In a composed manner, he referred to the scopes of trauma as a way to unveil aesthetically justified relationships.

From the fictional narrative expressions by Ghosh, it is evident that aesthetics is a strong tool to influence the structure of a trauma narrative. With elements like flashbacks, non-linear timelines, or fragmented storytelling, Ghosh appeared as an expert in mimicking the disjointed nature of traumatic memories, effectively conveying the disorientation experienced by those who have undergone trauma (Werner 54-58; Higgins 48-52). In literature, the representation of trauma significantly influences its perception, employing stark imagery, narrative metaphors, and symbolic elements to communicate the profound impact of trauma. These aspects are responsible for transcending the limitations of language in capturing its depth. The narratives by Amitav Ghosh are also highly notable for adeptly portraying the theme of delivering influential perceptions for generating transformation in the postcolonial individual. Just like his fiction, his non-fictional narrative is also successful in unfolding socio-cultural and historical landscapes, particularly in evaluating political, social, and environmental turmoil with a high level of insight.

The Non-Fictions

The selected non-fiction narratives by Ghosh, *The Great Derangement* and *The Nutmeg's Curse* are practical representations of the aesthetic alchemy for unveiling the transformative power of artistic choices in postcolonial trauma. Ghosh used the elements of imagery, evocative language and symbolism to make the reader aware of the profound inferences of climate change added by the long-term exploitation of colonialism on humanitarian existence. Ghosh utilised the tool of storytelling and offered prosaic elaborations to illuminate the sense of interconnectedness between emerging modern human societies and the increasing disconnectedness from the natural world.

It is through *The Great Derangement* (republished 2019) that Ghosh extended his narratives to the global phenomenon of climate change and made an introspective examination of the historical, socio-political and cultural dimensions of human existence. While urging the reader to realise the significance of confronting the increasing emergence of environmental challenges and traumatic historical crises, Ghosh made direct responses to the endangered consequences of climate change.

Further, in *The Nutmeg's Curse* (2021), Ghosh remained focused on critically evaluating the contemporary global setting concerning the historical transformations attained by nature. By depicting the journey of a nutmeg in the global arena, Ghosh interpreted environmental exploitation due to the expansion of colonialism and the growth of globalisation.

The core objectives of these non-fictions are marked in terms of critiquing the prompt introspection into the consequences of climate change making the reader realise the need to mitigate environmental challenges and develop the historical structure to prevent such crises in the future.

The Great Derangement: Climate Change and The Unthinkable (TGD 2016)

In this non-fiction, Amitav Ghosh offers an intriguing take on the process of scrutinising the collective human inability to fully grasp the magnitude and severity of climate change.

Similarly, at exactly the time when it has become clear that global warming is in every sense a collective predicament, humanity finds itself in the thrall of a dominant culture in which the idea of the collective has been exiled from politics, economics, and literature alike. (TGD 80)

Across the domains of literature, politics and history, Ghosh contends that the unprecedented nature of contemporary climate phenomena gets detected for defying conventional modes of thought and imagination. Referring to the transformation of the power of narrative art, Ghosh focussed on events like hundred-year storms and bizarre tornadoes as nature-driven choices in trauma narratives.

The unsettling parallels constructed between the current societal dysfunction and the looming threat of climate change, are marked under the shadow of analytical demands for understanding the systemic madness that is inherent in the contemporary world. It is this inherent lunacy that has been detected as the pathway for existential dread. In a very interesting manner, Ghosh established the sense of inmates and overseers to the self-inflicted confinement of human existential crises. As for the future, the perceptions are found to be devoid of ethical direction, leading to market-based enforcement, added by an endless state of nihilism to the global economic status.

'Stories', the first section of the book refers to the limitations of the contemporary literary novel that deals with individual moral exploration and ignores the wider context of climate

change. Ghosh contends that by anchoring narratives in stable climates and abundant resources, modern fiction fails to acknowledge the looming environmental crisis. Ghosh calls for a reinvigorated imagination to tackle climate change, though he acknowledges the limitations of fiction in addressing political and economic inertia.

When the subject of climate change occurs in these publications, it is almost always concerning nonfiction; novels and short stories are very rarely glimpsed within this horizon... It is as though in the literary imagination climate change was somehow akin to extraterrestrials or interplanetary travel. (TGD 7)

In the next section of 'History', Ghosh referred to the Anthropocene as a new epoch marked by human-induced environmental degradation. Hereby, the scholar confronts the pitfalls of a historicized mindset and highlights that the efforts to comprehend climate change have been entangled by the cycle of historical repetition. The conflicting aspect as marked by me in this context is the act of universalising the state of guilt and thereby perpetuation historical entrapment by Ghosh in general. This is a context that demands further in-depth evaluation.

The last section on 'Politics' can be marked as the critique of the narrow focus of contemporary politics. As Ghosh referred to the act of prioritising individual liberties over collective action, there is a direct reference to addressing existential threats, such as climate change. It is very intriguing to find that Ghosh laments the lack of meaningful political and moral transformation and the subject that is hindered by self-interest and denial. In a nutshell, the focus on artistic choices for Ghosh stands as the platform for transforming the power of artistic choices for depicting the follies led by humanitarian actions and increasing the level of inconsistency, through the recognition of the trauma narrative.

The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis (TNC 2021)

In this book, Ghosh offered a metaphorical entity to nutmeg by illustrating, 'Like a planet, the nutmeg is encased within a series of expanding spheres' (TNC 10).

In the context of detecting aesthetic alchemy in Ghosh's writings, this aspect is established as the narrative is constructed from the historical legacies of colonialism on Indigenous cultures, with the transformative power of the environment remaining predominant. It is the mysticism in the writings of Ghosh that leads to the departure from scientific principles and flirtation with superstition. On a critical note, it is the unwavering conviction of the author that holds back the choices of the readers as Ghosh encounters supernatural phenomena during his visit to the Banda Islands, a kind of postcolonial reference to the experiences of Dutch officials upon their arrival. Just as the Dutch colonisers interpreted the falling lamp as a sign of sinister intent from the indigenous people, Ghosh finds significance in the wailing of ambulances during the COVID crisis, seeing them as harbingers of dark realities. His alignment

with mystical elements reinforces his belief in the animate and powerful nature, drawing strength from his encounters and affirming readers' beliefs through his lived experiences.

With the selection of prevalent and post-COVID status, this narrative explored the nutmeg's voyage from its ancestral home in the Banda Islands to far-flung corners of the world. The traumatic explanations to uncover the enduring scars of colonialism upon Indigenous cultures and the environment, Ghosh chose to deliver the transformative power to ember inspiration, kindling the genesis of *The Nutmeg's Curse*. However, it was amidst the backdrop of a world in turmoil, amid the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, that Ghosh found himself stumbled upon a digital relic - a forgotten tome chronicling the harrowing saga of the Bandanese massacre. As such, the metaphorical representation of the Nutmeg undergoes the transformative power change and Ghosh penned down it as,

Humanity is being so closely entangled with the products of the Earth that the past cannot be remembered without them resources or commodities ... have no world- or history-making powers of their own (TNC 91).

It is interesting to note that within the tapestry of *The Nutmeg's Curse*, it was the artistic choice of Ghosh that resurrects the haunting echoes of the Dutch East India Company's relentless pursuit of nutmeg, intertwined with the blood-stained history of the Bandanese people. Through this haunting narrative, Ghosh invites readers to confront the interwoven legacies of colonial trauma and environmental degradation, urging us to heed the lessons of the past as we navigate the uncertain terrain of climate change and ecological crisis and states, "It is essential now, as the prospect of planetary catastrophe comes ever closer, that those nonhuman voices be restored to our stories" (TNC 257). It is thus, critical to consider the trauma narrative art of Ghosh as the provision to adept the usage of aesthetics alchemy and thereby hit the enriched act to portray trauma, imbuing the narratives with depth, complexity, and resonance.

CONCLUSION

The common thread that gets noted in the narratives of Ghosh is the choice of language and literary devices, which are meant to shape his narrative style. Ghosh's language is found to be strong enough to have a severe impact on realising the root causes of trauma and the metaphorical way of portraying it. Vivid descriptions, metaphors, and unique linguistic styles evoke a visceral response, fostering a more intimate connection between readers and the trauma narrative. Additionally, aesthetics can influence the resolution of a trauma narrative, utilizing specific visual or narrative elements to contribute to a sense of catharsis or closure for both the characters and the audience, providing a pathway towards healing and recovery. In summary, aesthetics serve as a crucial lens through which trauma narratives are presented and experienced, enabling creators to enhance their depth, emotional resonance, and impact, fostering a greater understanding and empathy for the complex nature of trauma through thoughtful and intentional artistic choices.

In the context of Amitav Ghosh's novels, the discussion of

postcolonial historic aporia becomes significant, especially given Ghosh's aversion to the term "postcolonial" which tends to portray the aftermath of colonialism in a negative light. Ghosh expresses his dissatisfaction with this characterization, stating,

... when I think of the world that I grew up to inhabit, my dominant memory of it is not that it was trying to be a successor state to a colony; it was trying to create its reality, which today is the reality that we do inhabit. (Kumar 105)

This perspective reflects Ghosh's inclination to focus on the efforts of postcolonial societies in shaping their distinct realities rather than being defined solely in opposition to their colonial past. Ghosh's novels, influenced by this viewpoint, illustrate the complexities of postcolonial experiences through the aesthetics of storytelling. Within his narrative framework, he employs symbolism, metaphor, and narrative structure to delve into the intricacies of trauma. Through these aesthetic choices, Ghosh offers a nuanced exploration of the psychological and emotional dimensions of characters' traumatic experiences, challenging conventional postcolonial narratives that tend to emphasize negativity. Ghosh's deliberate use of visual representation, sound, and literary devices in portraying trauma further underscores his commitment to presenting a multifaceted understanding of postcolonial realities. Consequently, his intentional and thoughtful aesthetic choices serve as a critical lens through which postcolonial trauma narratives are depicted, fostering a richer appreciation for the intricate nature of these stories and the diverse realities they represent (Visser 274-78).

On a conclusive note, the cosmopolitan mindset of Amitav Ghosh and his postmodernist narratives introduce self-reflective aspects for understanding both postcolonial and environmental-led crises. This suggests that a specific form of formal sophistication is inherently linked to thematic and ethical intricacies in the narratives of Ghosh. However, I find this suggestion concerning as it limits our comprehension of literature. From the new historical means of depicting trauma, especially the trauma led by colonial rule and the current status of climatic crises, I found Ghosh to be more inclined to traumatic perspectives led by instances of postcolonialism. In justification, Peter Barry very appropriately defined new historicism as, "A simple definition of the new historicism is that it is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period" (166).

Eventually, following the definition of Peter Barry on new historicism for understanding postcolonial perspectives, it is evident that Ghosh's creative vision delves into the intellectual landscape, meticulously chronicling the historical narrative of colonial and postcolonial settlements. However, the author unveils the forgotten historical and modern geopolitical truths, by making very selective artistic choices bringing them back into the collective awareness of the modern reader. The efforts are counted in terms of the lessons learnt in the most aesthetic alchemy that opens doors for further debates.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

1. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Shadow Lines*. Penguin India, 1st edition, republished 2009.
2. ---. *The Glass Palace*. Harper Collins, republished 2017.
3. ---. *The Hungry Tide*. Harper Collins, republished 2016.
4. ---. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Penguin, republished 2019.
5. ---. *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*. Penguin Allen Lane, 2021.

Secondary Sources

1. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. Routledge, 1989.
2. Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester University Press, 3rd edition, Oxford UK, 2009.
3. Dutta, Nandana. Subaltern Geoaesthetics in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*. *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2016.
4. Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Columbia University Press, 1998.
5. Higgins, Kathleen M. An Alchemy of Emotion: Rasa and Aesthetic Breakthroughs. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Volume 65, Issue 1, September 2007, pp 43–54.
6. Irigaray, Luce. *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*. Trans. Stephen Pluháček. Columbia UP, 2002.
7. Kumar, T. Vijay. 'Postcolonial' Describes You as a Negative: An Interview with Amitav Ghosh. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2007, pp. 99-105.
8. Molina, Joanne. Aesthetics and Alchemy in the Contemporary Kitchen. *Gastronomica*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2010, pp. 145–48.
9. Reid, Louis Arnaud. Intuition, Discursiveness and Aesthetic Alchemy. *Philosophy*, vol. 56, no. 215, 1981, pp. 89–99.
10. Sri Aurobindo. *Beauty (Yoga)*. Auropublications, Sri Aurobindo Society, Puducherry, 2009.
11. Visser, Irene. Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2011, pp. 270-282.
12. Werner, Anna-Lena. *Let Them Haunt Us: How Contemporary Aesthetics Challenge Trauma as the Unrepresentable*. Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld. May 2020.